

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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USDOE FOR BILLY HILL

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ENRG, PINT, UR
SUBJECT: SOVIET COMMENTS ON BREZHNEV'S SIBERIAN TRIP

1. IN CONVERSATION APRIL 11 WITH SCICOUNS ACADEMICIAN
AGANBERGYAN, DIRECTOR, INSTITUTE OF ECONOMICS AND ORGANI-
ZATION OF INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION, NOVOSIBIRSK, SIBERIAN
DEPARTMENT OF THE ACADEMY OF SCIENCES, STATED THAT
BREZHNEV'S SIBERIAN TRIP WILL RESULT IN INCREASED CAPITAL
INVESTMENTS IN SIBERIA GENERALLY AND MORE ATTENTION TO
WORKING CONDITIONS. IN RESPONSE TO SCICOUNS
COMMENT THAT BREZHNEV HAD CRITICIZED RAIL TRANSPORT IN
PARTICULAR, AGANBEGYAN STATED THAT BAM AND URENGOY RAIL
LINK PLANS ARE QUITE SATISFACTORY FOR SIBERIAN
DEVELOPMENT; WHAT IS REALLY NEEDED IS A GENERAL AND
BALANCED ACCELERATION OF INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT COMBINED
WITH BETTER WORKING CONDITIONS SO THAT MORE SOVIET WORKERS
WILL AGREE TO TRANSFER TO SIBERIA AND STAY THERE. CERTAIN
BRANCHES OF INDUSTRY SHOULD RECEIVE PRIORITY ATTENTION,
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INCLUDING ALUMINUM AND RAIL CAR PRODUCTION.

2. REGARDING ENERGY ISSUES AGANBEGYAN COMMENTED THAT
SIBERIAN GAS TRANSPORT REMAINS A MAJOR TECHNICAL PROBLEM
BUT EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT SATISFACTORY SOLUTIONS
WOULD BE FOUND. HE NOTED THE SOVIETS ARE DEVELOPING NOVEL
CHILLED GAS PIPE (REPORTED SEPTTEL) WHICH WILL BE IN USE

WITHIN FIVE YEARS. EVEN WITH NEW TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENTS, AGANBEGYAN ADMITTED THAT GAS WILL STILL REQUIRE FOUR TIMES THE AMOUNT OF PIPELINE TO TRANSMIT EQUIVALENT AMOUNTS OF BTUS IN COMPARISON WITH OIL PIPELINES. NEVERTHELESS GAS DEVELOPMENT MUST BE PUSHED SINCE PETROLEUM DESERVES ARE LIMITED. AGANBEGYAN ALSO NOTED THAT SOVIETS HAVE EXPERIENCED PROBLEMS IN CONSTRUCTION OF GAS PIPELINES IN PERMAFROST REGIONS, WHICH RAISES CONSTRUCTION COSTS AND TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES. HOWEVER, DESPITE THE LOCATION OF BULK OF GAS DEPOSITS IN PERMAFROST REGIONS, HE SAID THE GREAT PERCENTAGE OF PIPELINE NEEDED IS IN NON-PERMA FROST ZONES.

3. COMMENT: AGANBEGYAN'S COMMENTS ON THE NEED FOR MORE ATTENTION TO IMPROVING LIVING CONDITIONS (IN ADDITION TO THE EXISTING "PERKS") ONLY UNDERLINES A LONG-STANDING PROBLEM THAT STEMS FROM SOVIET EMPHASIS ON BUILDING PRODUCTION CAPACITY AND SLIGHTING SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE CONSTRUCTION. THE ATTENTION GIVEN TO THIS PROBLEM BY BREZHNEV DURING HIS TRIP SUGGESTS THAT THE POLICY OF UNBALANCED DEVELOPMENT IS HAVING ONE OF ITS QUITE PREDICTABLE EFFECTS. ON THE OTHER HAND, AGANBEGYAN'S ASSERTION - WHICH WE TEND TO TAKE SERIOUSLY - THAT BREZHNEV'S SIBERIAN TRIP WILL RESULT IN INCREASED CAPITAL INVESTMENT IN SIBERIA GENERALLY STANDS IN SOME CONTRAST WITH BREZHNEV'S REMARKS ON THE TRIP ITSELF TO THE EFFECT THAT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ENTERPRISES SHOULD TRY TO DO BETTER WITH THEIR EXISTING "RESERVES" OF EQUIPMENT AND MANPOWER. IT IS THIS ASPECT OF HIS REMARKS THAT HAS THUS FAR RECEIVED PROMINENCE IN SOVIET MEDIA REPORTING ON ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE IN THE FIRST QUARTER. TOON

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